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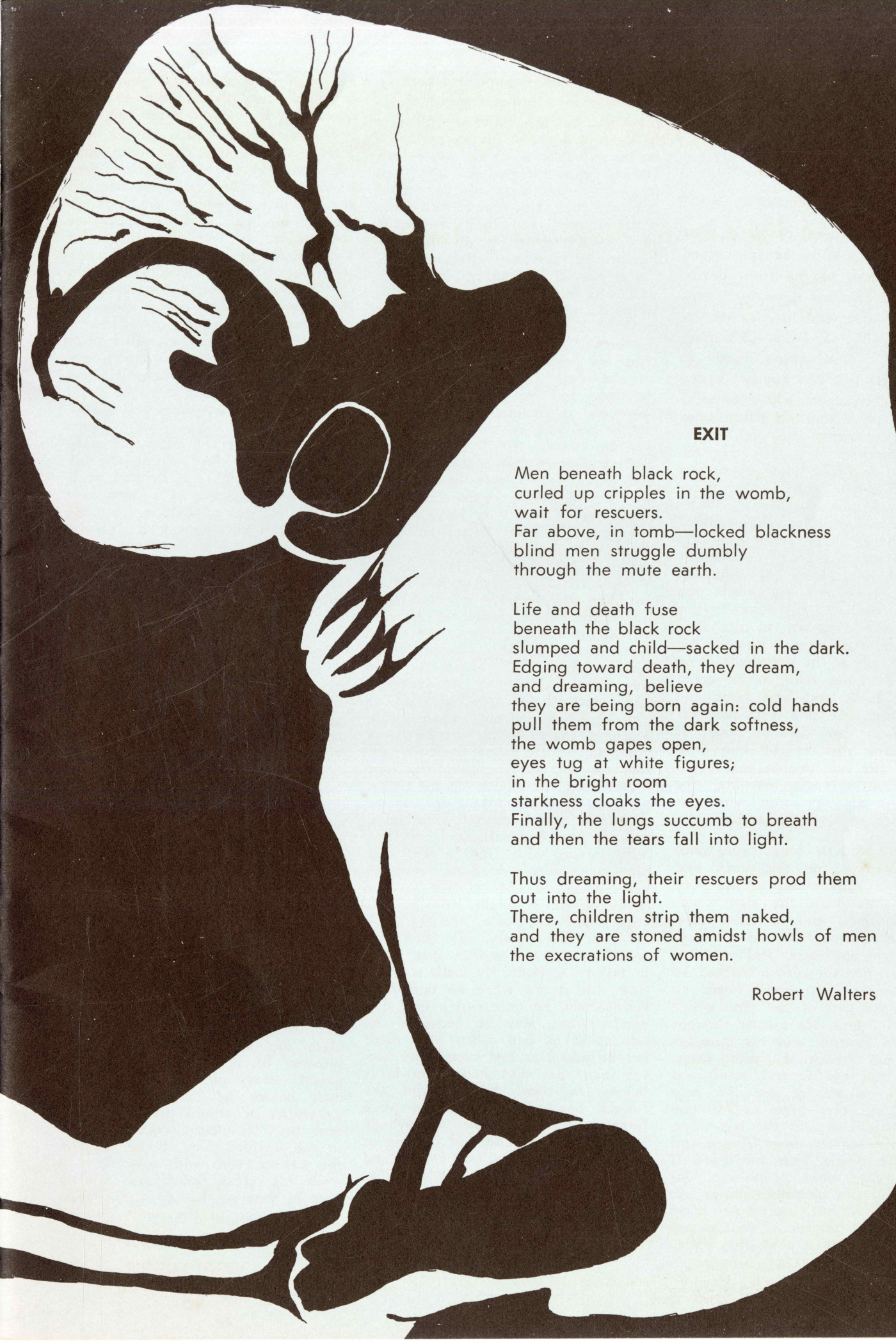

EXIT

Men beneath black rock,
curled up cripples in the womb,
wait for rescuers.
Far above, in tomb—locked blackness
blind men struggle dumbly
through the mute earth.

Life and death fuse
beneath the black rock
slumped and child—sacked in the dark.
Edging toward death, they dream,
and dreaming, believe
they are being born again: cold hands
pull them from the dark softness,
the womb gapes open,
eyes tug at white figures;
in the bright room
starkness cloaks the eyes.
Finally, the lungs succumb to breath
and then the tears fall into light.

Thus dreaming, their rescuers prod them
out into the light.
There, children strip them naked,
and they are stoned amidst howls of men
the execrations of women.

Robert Walters

Summer Vespers

By Stanley Hamby

Seb Bullock smelled the dense odor of a summer rain as he approached the screen door of the front porch. It was one of those days that seems to isolate time and it chooses its own pace, like a mule, slow and methodical. There wasn't much to do on a day like this but sit in one of the wicker chairs whose bottoms had acquired a concave effect from years of experience. Seb felt something mysterious about the way the rain faded and filled the air with a mist so fine you could hardly notice where the droplets touched a puddle. The porch was sort of enveloped as it sheltered the washing tubs, the tools and assorted pieces of machinery in as many states of disrepair. The clutter was pretty much the same as it had been since when Granpa used to sit out on nice days. He said he was sunning himself, but he always stayed in the shade. You had to be quiet then so he could hear the birds and june bugs and bumble bees. He said a body never got tired of that kind of music. It was Granpa that taught him how to value the information that could be acquired through listening, for small boys are not born with this appreciation as a rule he said.

It had been a long time since Granpa had sat on the porch and dissected a bumble bee or wasp to acquaint him with the significance of the business end of those creatures. Seb remembered a lot of things about his grandfather, and at times like now when the silence blocked all other escapes, he would begin to think into a part of his mind where he stored things. He usually thought about the funeral, and his thoughts would run backward from there. What made the funeral stand out in his mind was it was the only one he had ever been to for one thing; besides, it was the last thing he could remember about Granpa and that made it first. Then too, funerals and morgues make people act different, and you remember things like that anyway. Seb had been taken along with a number of cousins and other relatives to a place they called a funeral home. Granpa had been lying there in a casket covered up to his waist, but Seb could see the thin hands folded across his stomach, not by his side like when he was asleep. He had on a suit too, and a tie, and it gave you a funny feeling to see him like that. The funeral home was dimly lighted and uninteresting in spite of the potted plants that represented an occasional effort to break the persistent monotony. Everything seemed to be overcast in an unearthly yellow haze, and the smell made Seb think of Uncle Malachi. Uncle Malachi carried a bottle of camphor to clear his head and sinuses. He was all the time forgetting to replace the top, and in the morning the room had to be aired out. The bed clothes and curtains would smell that way for weeks after he was gone. Seb remembered how Uncle Malachi's hair always looked wet, and how he once had a yellow canary he would carry around with him. He had told Seb that it a sort of a parrot and could talk too, but Seb never had any luck catching him at it. Uncle Malachi could always put his ear to the cage and hear the most wonderful things. Seb wondered at this marvel for a while, but as the bird's talent increased with improbable facility he began to suspect the gift was Uncle Malachi's imagination, and some of the grownups said so too. One hot summer when Uncle Malachi was traveling around as a salesman, he had taken the bird with him and left the cage on the floor of the back seat of the car. Of course with the windows rolled up on one side there wasn't enough ventilation, and the bird had sufficated. Seb had been staying with Granpa that evening when Uncle Malachi drove up and discovered this change in the bird's health. It might have been a child the way Uncle Malachi took on over that canary. He cried and wouldn't eat any supper that night or talk to anybody. He made a tombstone for it too when he buried it. Granpa said he once had a bird dog named Mac, and he reckoned he felt about as bad when Mac died; but he said Mac had been more useful than that bird had been—birds belong in trees. Seb thought the funeral home was probably a place Granpa wouldn't like. Everybody kept standing around and looking at him for a long time, and crying, and Seb wished he were somewhere else. One of the twins complained he was tired of looking at Granpa and wanted to go look at somebody else. Aunt Birdie had latched on to his ear with such reprimand you heard it crack and advised him to keep quiet. Seb had stayed quiet too.

He remembered back to the hospital where Granpa had been sick. He had looked all different then to Seb, and when he went over to the bed to hug him, he saw a dampness in Granpa's eyes he had never seen there. It was like those far away looks he sometimes got when they were walking alone.They would sit down to rest on a log or something, and Granpa would take out his plug of tobacco and carve a piece for himself and a smaller piece for Seb. It always looked good, and it always burned his tongue. He had tried to learn to like it so he could be like Granpa, but after a few minutes he would spit it out. Granpa would laugh at the faces he made and ask what was wrong—he always asked that. Then he had made Seb a little pipe out of a dried corn cob and a piece of hollow stem. He showed him how to pack it with dry fig leaves and light it, but he cautioned him not to practice around his mother because women were peculiar about things like that. These were the only vices of Granpa's he had ever been aware of, and them only because Grandma was constantly bringing them to his attention. Seb spent a lot of time with Granpa during the seven summers he could remember anything at all about, and there were lots of memories, and these memories were tied to other memories so that each time he sat down he began to remember, something new would be added to the picture he was constructing in his mind. Always they led him to the one place that puzzled him the most. He wasn't really sure just what it was. Maybe, he thought, he was confusing two or three separate memories as the same one. But this one always came back the same way. During those summers, just before dark each day, Seb would take a blue mason jar and begin to collect fireflies as they appeared. Later their soft mesmeric flickerings would replace the hidden thoughts in the shadows of his bedroom. Grandma would always call him to take his bath before he had enough, and sometimes he would pretend not to hear her. He never waited for her to call a third time though because she was as handy with a switch as a wash rag. This ordeal was usually over in time so that he and Granpa could go out on the porch and sit

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INVEIGH

No wonder the words and poems of the modern poets
are writ in the flame
burn baby burn!
They were born of flame.

In the post-war passions our fathers
flocked to bed with a world turned whore
in a turning world,
burn baby burn,
burn their long forgetful sleep
like flaming nettel, murmuring worlds
of irremediable battles
and immolated girls

burn baby burn
the insidious desires
of incarnate fires
we, the nothing poets
were jerked caesarian and maim
(flesh from their flame)
into a world of shame and searing flesh

Turn world turn;
no wonder the words and poems of the modern poets
are writ in flame

fire must fight fire
burn baby burn!

Robert Walters

"P" IS FOR PALEONTOLOGY

Consider the sages who pulverize boulders,
And burrow from elbows and shinbones and shoulders,
And shovel the loot from a hill or a dale of it,
And lovingly carry off pail after pail of it.

Anon, a remarkable Tyrannosaurus
As tall as a steeple is standing before us
Rebuilt from a bit of the skin or a scale of it,
Or maybe as much as a single toe-nail of it.

Curators are handy to speak of its habits
To say that it fed on the forebearers of rabbits
To mimic the whine, or the whistle or wail of it
And tell (in a whisper) the female or male of it.

But though in the quest for some primitive lemur,
They fish out fragment of petrified femur,
I wish they'd not fashion a four-footed whale of it,
Without ever knowing the head or tail of it.*

*And I don't give a hoot for Harvard or Yale of it!

Dr. J. F. L. Connell

COWS AND WOMEN: POSTERIORLY SPEAKING

The milk-cow's rump is a hideous thing,
All knots and gnarls and lumps,
With a gristle-tail protruding from a hump,
Most always covered with caked manure.
But oui-oui monsieur!
The rump of an enchanting lady brings
Such rapture as you see it glide
Down the neon-lit street,
And usually makes you want to meet
The other side.

But the milk-cow's rump to the passionate bull
Culminates the powerful,
And our lady's rump to the very same,
Leaves him listless, calm and tame.
So do not think my mind diseased,
Butt,—love lies in the loins of the species.

Robert Walters

IKEUS

Across the Aegean Sea
I would fly on wings of wax
I would journey to Thermopylae.

Amid the jagged labyrinthian crevices,
The coastal cliffs
I stand watching the horizon.
And when the heavens open up
To show the faces of the gods
Who point to me which stars are mine
I do not see a shield and sword
But a vial of camphor.

Across the Aegean Sea
I would fly—but shall I fly
Too close to the sun?
I see the black-sailed ship
And jump.

Harvey Estes

SPRING

Almost as an afterthought
the year
spits out the spring.

Under the clothes you bought,
Below piles of trivia, old letters
is spring.

The year, an old man, half in tears,
slurring obscenities
expecterates
the spring.

Above the sidewalks, unnoticed,
move his sandals of insanity,

an ancient man, his back to us
coughs up old phlem

and spits out
the spring.

Robert Walters

Detachment

By V. S. Summerlin

"Etc., etc., amen."

A man's body was removed from its casket and lowered on to a white plastoid slab. A light flashed; both the man's body and the plastoid slab were disintegrated, only vapours remained.

"Detach yourself," a male voice suggested through the flute solo benediction.

The widow asked "Why?", as they each received a large mug of beer from the funeral bartender. Taking the beer they left the Grief Reception. She was not interested in listening to her husband's friends' pre-taped sorrow, she only wanted to check her husband's tall white monument in the Court of Columns.

They drank their beer and walked wordlessly among the Tall Whites and then left.

The east light, reflected by the canal's water, was interrupted as they walked between the canal and the targeted buildings. The ascending sun marked their walk.

For something to say, she commented, "How charming he was those last minutes." She shaded her eyes looking at her irrelated companion blurred by the eye level sun. He walked without reply and unaffected. "I remember his full loins, his body, his strength, his . . ."

"So," he snapped, showing no embarrassment or concern.

"So," she repeated. "So, he died of a cold." Her lip twitched with doubt as to how safe her life was.

They walked back past the Court of Columns. The gates were locked. The grounds were vacant except for the flowers and the half buried Tall Whites. The sentries were in their shed drinking and playing card games, waiting to be relieved by the morning shift.

"Look at them, irrespectful of their job; they don't care if he is dead."

"Nor do I," he said in hopes of stirring her.

"No," she replied non-plaintively, "He's dead today, tomorrow, and . . ."

"De . . ." he interrupted, but stopped as she looked at him with a wordless question.

They walked directionlessly, except for following the easiest paths. Just walking and each hoping the other had no place to go or to be and not wanting to leave the other's company. No more words were exchanged for a long time, not until new scenery brought on a different mood.

Their wandering led them to the sea park where they removed their shoes and ran in the hot sand. They hurried past the sea gardeners who were raking up scattered sand back to the dunes. They ran all the way and into the water. The artificial sand held heat longer than ordinary sand and the sun was at its hottest then.

They cooled their feet and waded far down the beach where the new sand ended and the old, darker sand began. There they stopped. They had reached the last beach service phone and bath house. The sand continued on down to the point which was rocky with weather eased bluffs.

"Refreshing change from the funeral, isn't it? I think I'll become nude and swim; how about you?" She removed her light weight dress, folded it and placed it over her empty panties and shoes.

He struck her gaze. "Detach yourself." Hardly had his words reached her or his firm expression altered before she had spun and run into the water. Quietly to himself he muttered, "Detachment." Quickly he unclothed and entered bodily into the waves.

They met in deeper water, detached, afternoon and night.

"Dark sand's blowing over our clothes; dawn's early" he thought, "but not sensual at all, just a dry early dawn."

"How did you meet my husband?" she asked through a yawn as she shifted from her right side to her left.

"Accidently." He paused. "Did you mind your husband dying?" He was still watching the sand covering their clothes and the dawn growing.

"No." she took a breath, but decided to say no more.

"That's nice," he said, as if unaware of the conversation. He got up and walked to the beach phone and ordered breakfast. "Four bottles of Beaujolais, clams for two and a loaf of wheat bread." Shouting back to the widow, "I hope you don't mind red wine with seafood," in an unapologetic tone, almost daring her to disagree with his order.

The sun passed higher and their flesh pinkened. He reached over and tested her breast and stomach for sunburn. "You skin is warm, are you burning?"

"No," she replied, and said, "Order more clams and wine; also a pillow and please get some white wine this time; your palate must have wall to wall carpeting." She smiled to herself and rolled over.

Walking back from the phone to their sandy bed, he observed two old men coming to that part of the beach with fishing gear. Bathers rarely attended that area; solitude was not solicited there but was the accepted rule. "Back in a bit," he said as he trotted past her.

The elder of the two old men bade a return hello and the younger-looking one smiled gaily. He ambled down along the beach to the point carrying the basket and reel that he offered to carry for them.

Later he returned to the widow smiling; not at the replenished food supply but because of the fish stories he had learned. She raised up wryly, drank some wine, put her back to the sun and went back to sleep while he was telling her of how the elder fisherman saved the younger-looking one from falling off a bluff with a single thread of fishing line, down there at the point. "We'll have to go down there," he said. He opened his red wine, musing over the story, and picked up a handful of clams. "Funny," he mumbled as he slept, "neither drink, swim, swear nor screw; funny." He put an adaptor on the wine bottle, lay back in the sand and drank.

In late afternoon she awoke to his insisting shaking.

"You are going to stay here again tonight, aren't you?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Detach yourself, this is the rule," he said staunchy, while patting her rough hand. "Detachment is the key."

"You never said why I should be detached."

With a strong, quick reply, he said, "No, not 'be' detached, just detached! There's a difference. Detachment means to be truly free of mind; pure self-feedom. Understand?"

"I'll be detached, but not that insipid cliche, freedom and stuff. And there's a difference in freedoms. All those kids in town are screaming that stuff and they come out here, right there, and scream it. Hell, they're too free. I'll just go under. Anyway, it's not important for me to feel free any more. I'm forty-three and I'm going along as I please. Besides detachment isn't all that freedom stuff anyway," she said poignantly.

"Oh, but it is," he shouted in his excitement," It is and you've got to see it. Detachment is beyond free-

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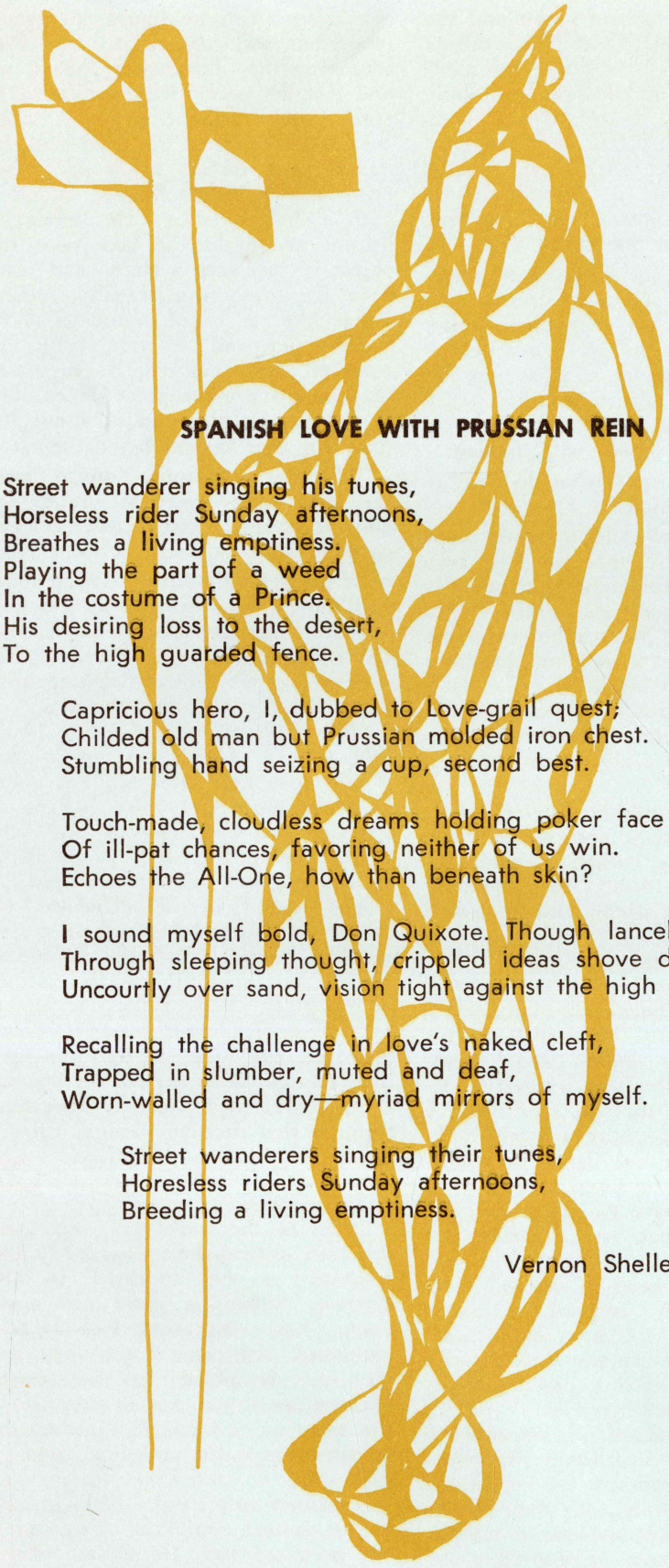

SPANISH LOVE WITH PRUSSIAN REIN

Street wanderer singing his tunes,
Horseless rider Sunday afternoons,
Breathes a living emptiness.
Playing the part of a weed
In the costume of a Prince.
His desiring loss to the desert,
To the high guarded fence.

Capricious hero, I, dubbed to Love-grail quest;
Childed old man but Prussian molded iron chest.
Stumbling hand seizing a cup, second best.

Touch-made, cloudless dreams holding poker face grins
Of ill-pat chances, favoring neither of us win.
Echoes the All-One, how than beneath skin?

I sound myself bold, Don Quixote. Though lanceless in tense
Through sleeping thought, crippled ideas shove defense
Uncourtly over sand, vision tight against the high fence.

Recalling the challenge in love's naked cleft,
Trapped in slumber, muted and deaf,
Worn-walled and dry—myriad mirrors of myself.

Street wanderers singing their tunes,
Horesless riders Sunday afternoons,
Breeding a living emptiness.

Vernon Shelley Summerlin

THE DREAM

By Cynthia Crispell

The key turned in the lock and in they came as if blown by the wild March wind itself. The girl laughed with breathless relief to be inside; and as she smoothed back her dark curls from her forehead, a feeble ray of sunshine caught the sparkle of a diamond. Her face was flushed, but whether from the wind or from an inner excitement was anyone's guess. Today this was his apartment; soon it would be theirs. Smiling, she looked up into the face of her companion.

"Where shall we begin?" she asked. "You know, I've got lots of stuff to move in."

"I know!" he laughed. "Let's clear out the desk first so you'll have a place for your things until we get something else. Huh! There's no telling what we'll find in those drawers; I've hardly used that desk since last year."

"Well, we'd better get busy, then. Do you want me to help you look through the stuff, or what? Hey! I know! Suppose you go through that side and I'll take this one, and unless I find something I think is important, I'll go ahead and throw it away. Okay?"

"Fine with me."

As they worked they talked about their future together. At first, he spontaneously and enthusiastcally proposed that sometime they plan to do something different and exciting.

"You know, sometime after we get settled, let's buy some property way out in the woods!"

"In the woods? What for, for Pete's sake?"

"So we can build a house someday and live off away from everybody and enjoy the . . ."

"Oh, get real! Who wants to live a hundred miles from everybody! Why, Mother would absolutely die! For that matter, your mom would never argee either and you know it. Why don't we make our own furniture instead?" she laughed. "That would be about as practical as living in the woods." "Well, why not?" he asked. "It's been done by a few daring souls."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, be serious!"

For a while neither spoke and the room was filled with an uneasy silence except for the rattle and shuffle of papers and the ocassional dull, metalic thuds made as old catalogues, advertisement circulars, and pages of school notes hit the trash can. Finally, about to discard a travel circular depicting a colorful and inviting beach scene, the boy spoke again.

"Come on!" she interrupted impatiently. "That's a nice dream, but nobody ever has any time after they're married and we won't be any different. Besides . . . what would people think?" she asked, her voice revealing the scandal which she had just attributed others with feeling.

"Aw, it'd be fun—what do we care what people think?"

"Well, I care! And I should hope you'd care too! If not for your own sake, at least for mine." Then in a compromising tone she added, "You know, we could have a home on the lake out there close to Mother's friends, couldn't we?"

"That's an idea," he said with a disgusted snort. "Everybody does that, though. It really doesn't matter, I guess."

The March sunlight filtered coldly through the blinds; somewhere down the street a dog barked monotonously; and faintly from the towering steeple of the Catholic church a dull bass bell chimed.

"Nine . . . ten . . . eleven . . . twelve . . ." he silently counted. "Should I ask her?" he wondered. Finally, cautiously, he spoke of his ambition. "You know what? Ever since I was little, I've wanted something. I always thought that when I grew up I would have a small cabin tucked away in the Canadian woods so that when I wanted to relax I would always have a place to go. You suppose that, well, someday we could . . ."

Shaking her head in amused commiseration, she laughed, "Dreams again! Darling, you're so impractical! But, I love you anyway!" She wrinkled her nose until a playful, little-girl grin touched her eyes.

He forced a smile in response to her merriment, realizing with disappointment that because of her practical influence none of their plans would ever be adventurous or unique. "That's one reason Mother likes her so well," refleted the young man. And as they continued for a time working in silence, he pursued his train of thought, observing how ruthlessly she rummaged through his belongings. Yet, he found a certain tenderness and concern in her eyes whenever they by chance looked up and met his gaze. He never failed to feel slightly uneasy, however, when she boldly returned his look; and, he had noticed, instead of dropping her eyes, she would hold his attention with a brazen stare. He gradually became aware that he was now the object of just such a stare and had been for some time. Finally, feeling rather like a caged animal whose every action and emotion could be observed and analyzed, he suggested that he go prepare some lunch. She agreed to the idea and held out her hand for him to pull her to her feet.

"No, that's all right. You go ahead and finish this while I make the sandwishes. I'm right in here; if you need me, just call out."

As he walked from the living room into the kitchen, he felt a tenseness fall from him and he wondered why. The thought occurred to him that perhaps he was merely apprehensive about his forthcoming marriage.

"But that's ridiculous! Why should I be uneasy? I love her, of course; I must love her; after all, I'm going to marry her! And you don't marry someone you don't love. So, why would I be apprehensive? . . . Must be excited, I guess, and a little tired."

And with that, he dismissed his doubts and turned his attention to making lunch. Having discovered that he had used all of the lettuce in the green salad of the day before, he convinced himself that it didn't look too bad—for a left-over—and that though unappetizing in appearance, it was still edible. Breaking through this decisive thought came a cascade of piercing, yet infectious giggles and he realized that she was calling to him.

"Why in the world did you keep this old shriveled-up pecan?" she demanded as he appeared in the doorway. What's it good for now? Look, how dry inside!" As she exclaimed, she cracked the shell and the nut crumbled in her hand. "Pecans are to eat, not to keep, silly! You're no squirrel!" And she dropped the dusty remains into a trash can.

A protest rose and died in his throat. It was too late. Long ago it had been too late. He smiled with a look of sad resignation, and again there came the sound of amused laughter as he retreated once more into the refuge and peace of the

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LUCILE GARDNER

I knew Lucile Gardener
when she was old
I didn't know her
when she was too old
and
nobody would let her
be young.

Lucile's mind
wasn't quite right
That's what her sister
told me
anyway.

So I accepted it
but I didn't mind
Because she was friendly
to me
And that's what counts
to me.

When I was young
she was still old
But she smiled
at me
And I told her
to be as young as
she wanted
to be.

She never had a chance
to grow up,
She was born
an old maid;
Although she did
have a boy friend
once.

He took what she gave
and took off
And he left her
to be
an old maid.
She was born that way
anyway
So it didn't matter
except to me
Because I believed
in humanity
and all the kindness
I could extend.

LAUGH, CHILD

Thy squeals of delight tell me
Of one who is happy.
Bare feet kicking in the warm soil,
The summer scent of lilac and blooms—
Thy hands flashing in the golden warmth.
Now move thy brown legs—
Dance.

Laugh and dance and giggle thy white teeth to the blueness
Swing thine arms, thy fingers out to soak in
The yellow moist air—
Dance and twirl, child, smile for me!
Close thine eyes and turn thy face
To the sun!
Spin, child, spin!

For thou art loved.

Keith Harrelson

THE LEAF

Reluctant to release its fragile form
The Leaf
Sucks the sapless bark bound
Breast.
A breeze withstood, a gust, and then the separation
An inch, then two, a foot in flight and falling.
Dependant on a tease, the wind, uncertain
Suspense, scattered confusion.
Five feet in flight and falling.
Unnoticed in a pathless space, slips the
Silent Fragile
Form.
Unarmed against the rising of the wood,
A sudden shock, a twist, then stilled,
The leafy
Remnant.
Behold you now your lofty bough stripped
And naked in the wind!
Hush . . . Behold Spring past.

L. Waide

I remember pushing
my lawn mower
across her lawn;
She promised to pay
a quarter,
But, her smile was gone
and I gave her back
the quarter.

She just smiled
And took life in vain
and smiling
she died.

Cecil Otis Campbell

RESIGNATION

Paused beside the pink rain,
Lamplight hues linger in candle jaws.

(Gutter, street and gutter;
washing water rinses the soles of movement
but drenches the staid.)

Pink reflected, faceted hues
(that rarely move) melts.
Dripping tallow, melancholoy drools,
Mooring the spirit into malignant pools.

V. S. Summerlin

THE QUARREL

Once again, sweet oil soothes
    The surface of the troubled waters
And once again the raging undercurrents
    Continue . . .
        boiling . . .
            seething . . .

Waiting . . .
        Waiting for the next storm winds
    To strip the calm water's veneer away
    To expose and liberate the fierce, raving violence
Of the aqueos dungeon of hate.

Words—
    Mere lipping forms.
Trained well you were
To say the 'right' thing—
Always . . .

Cynthia Crispell

SANCTUARY

At least at night, snow is nothing
but an old warrior, resting
weary of carousels in the skies

Or like the kiss of innocence, it lies
in crystal sanctuary, a cold papoose
on the back of its mother,—

earth! how wonderful and strange
we find the sancity of snow.
On the plains, a poet

works himself deep into the snow
like some old Alaskan dog
before he can sleep. We too, you and I,

before we sleep, vainly imagine ourselves
a brave young warrior
asleep in the sanctuary of snow.

The calipers close to measure our souls
and how many worlds away we are
from where the soul and snow might

lie together like lovers long, long apart
and the red-blood tracks of the heart
are caressed by tongues of wolves
that cry pure notes into the cold, pure night.

Robert Walters

#3

A birth was born toniht.
Unblamed, the dead who are already dead
Sleep in their grief;
And, not great and not small all the rest,
The guilty ones,
Kneel, for unto them a child is come—

Trifling, weak, and helpless,
The most diminutive of birds, softest,
Fondest, blindest,
Suffèred to live in a mortal world,
Fallen and sad—
Lying in bed counting her frailties.

Pain sits on fragile bones,
On shrouded eyes that are tired and afraid;
A mind insists
There must be a limit to pain somewhere
In the death of being,
For what has night to do with Moppet?

Fey McDonald

A WATER COLOR NIGHT

A water color night, the fog draped
Itself about my body with a dread
Akin only to
Death;
Death whose cool wet hands raked
Across my soul screaming and tearing
Away the remnants
Of life.
Dank mongrel, fog and darkness, cast
Itself against the sea, as the endless
Pattern of time echoed in the superficial
Roar of conversations
Past.
I moved along slowly as if drawn by two
Opposing forces—the sea and life;
Then slipping easily into the waiting
Waves, strangely comforting.

L. Waide

EYES AT TREBLINKA

Eyes at Treblinka shine like these
Eyes I can remember,
Once like those wide eyes
That overcome me,
We turn around and your small face
Becomes a laughing skull.

Eyes that would blink eyelids against
White cheeks, like thin bones blink
Behind human lampshades
Like eyes of white sockets, staring,
Flaming rockets from wire fences.

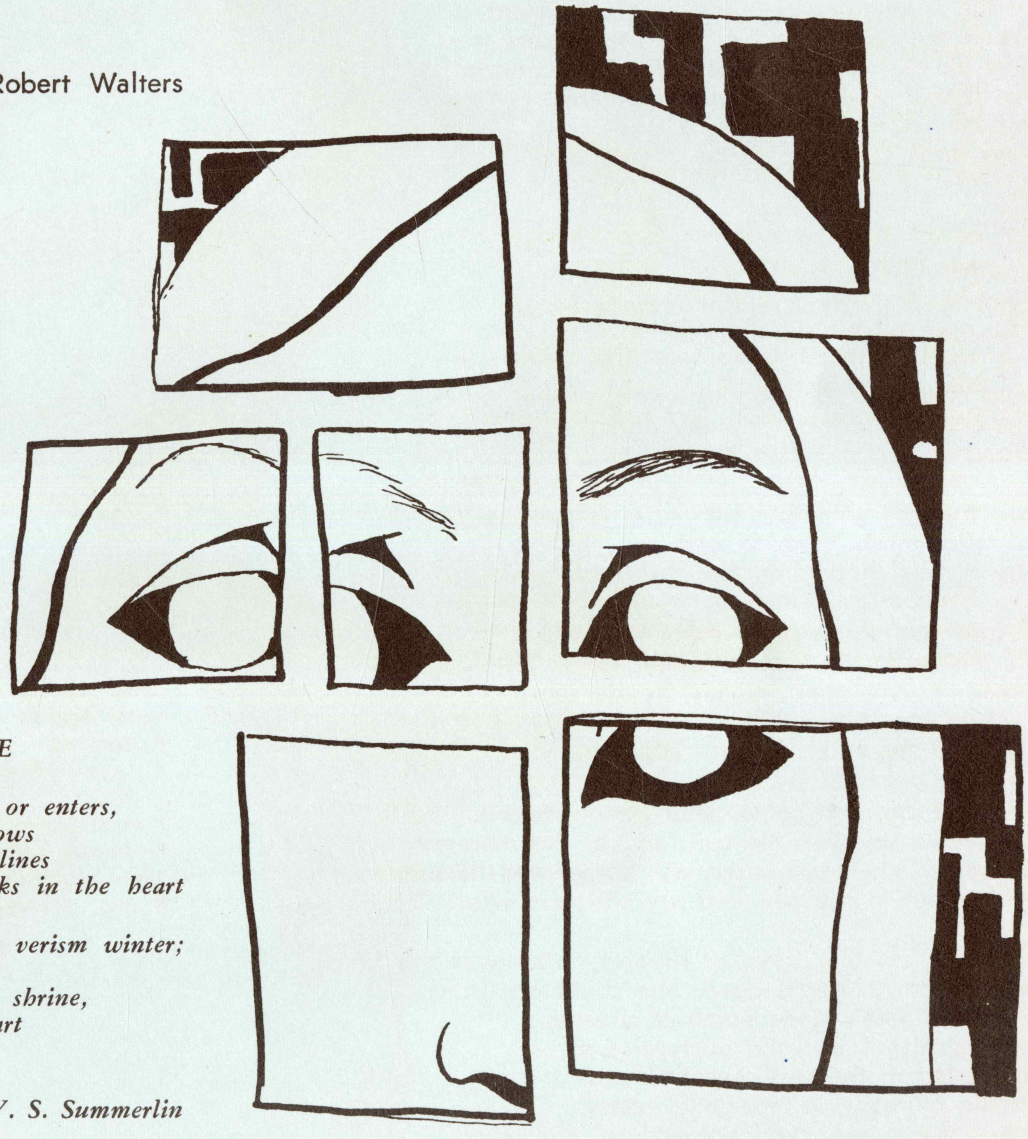
Eyes at Treblinka shine like these
Like the eyes of lovers beneath dark trees,
Like yours, like mine,
Like these.

Robert Walters

ONCE

Her childed mind flows deafly over a crystal sea,
gliding in the arms of fog-lit ghosts to brinks
of Unreality; where ferry breath castles await
her neutered life. Nepenthes prepares her satin hair—
She turns her starving arctic glare of snow at me.

V. S. Summerlin



WINDOW HOME

Window Home, nothing escapes or enters,
the Sphinx laughs at winter elbows
suckling cracked wood; wizened lines
watch three-legged through cracks in the heart

Window Home, nothing to ease verism winter;
the gods alone escape the slow,
hideous communion: the ancient shrine,
encoffined forever in the fated art
of the Window Home.

Robert Walters & V. S. Summerlin

RAIN

(For Karen)

The gnarled limbs, the black bough, the mutinous rain
That trembled in the currents of blood, thoughts
That shuddered in the rain and the open breasts
Glistening with the pain of indefinite ectasy,
Where are they now?
And the dreams of rain,
The outlaw-waif that threw arms uplifted
On the porch of dreams, cones that fell
In hyperbole of the silent storm, and dreams
That lived in the damp marrow; where are these?

II

They live in the tyranny of the sun,
In the ghosts of rain, and in the slow
Enslavement of the bough.
Now, the gnarled limbs,
The mutinious rain, dry and crumble
In the swollen blood; and at the moment
When the rain should escape the fingers
Like an elusive animal, its precise existence
As distant as the fjord or her dreams;
It becomes as tangible as a stone
And dries to salt, a statue of the sun.

III

Children call across a schoolyard.
Even their sunny voices express a terror,
"Teacher, when will it rain?"

Mud cracks, dries, tongues swell, choke
Their sunny voices, they cry again,
"Teacher, when will it rain?"

Tell them it will not rain, what is past
Is dead, teach them to endure
The natural horror of the perigee.

Before you die, instruct them in the beauty
Of the cactus; Keep formalities, never let them
Dream of you then, naked, in the rain.

IV

She will die, and be as dead as the trees
That have dried in the sun; and at the moment
Of her death the children will come, and they
Will sweat in the sun and say she was wise.

Rain falls on the grave of dreams, what was the fjord
And dream in her is dead. She could not brave
The loneliness on the porch of dreams,
The damp marrow, the hurt voice of rain
That cried in the crevices of dreams
Or the pain of the indefinite ectasy.
These things she could not endure, nor save.

Robert Walters

THE DREAM (Continued)

kitchen. "Of course she's right," he thought. "You can't keep things like that." He breathed the faintest hint of a sigh. "I guess you shouldn't hold on to memories, either."

He paused in front of the window and gazed outside into the clear, wind-swept day. Something about this day—was it the wind or the chilly bite to the air?—reminded him of another day now more than a year past. With a sense of wistful longing, he remembered that the November day had been bright and clear, not dreary and grey with rain as it usually was at that time of the year. Vivid scenes of memory passed in sequence before his staring eyes. He remembered the two of them togther—wasting the last of these lucious fall days, gathering pecans. But, reflecting a moment as he wind playing with her hair, he decided that nothing was a waste so long as she was there with him. Yes, gathering pecans could be fun and was, he decided.

"Watching her hair blow in the wind," he thought, "is like seeing a shower of bright autumn leaves chase each other to the ground." And then he smiled at the thought because it sounded silly to say the words—even to himself.

As he stood looking at her, she glanced up and momentarily met his gaze. For that brief instant, he caught a glimpse into her soul. Love seemed to shine through her eyes like the soft glow of candlelight. He looked away quickly, as though he had beheld the naked thoughts and emotions of her mind and heart; he felt that he held no right to see this much of her inner-self revealed. And, yet, he yearned to own that privilege. When he took his eyes from the distant hills and the sky and again encountered hers, she smiled, reassuring him that there could someday be room for two in the private sanctuary which he had unintentionally invaded.

The day began growing dimmer and the setting sun shone on her hair and sparkled in her tawny eyes as she looked up into his face. Pressing a brown, rounded nut into his hand, she earnestly whispered, "Today's special—keep this to remember it by."

And kept it he had—until this day. How well he remembered that day, and with it, the memory of many other days remained to color his thoughts. Wonderful days. Cold days. Cloudy days. But whatever else they were always days filled with love and with unexplainable joy and peace and with a sense of adventure and with her. And then he remembered one day when she was no more. He always blotted from his mind the circumstances of her going. He could picture her in only one way—glowing with life and love—just as she had been one Novembr day.

Unexpectedly feeling her arms around his waist, he started and wheeled around, almost instantly and with an almost sickening dissappointment, realizing who the girl was. A cry of anguish caught in his throat and in a desperate attempt to forget the vision of his thoughts and to prevent the coming of the familiar emptiness which he had so often experienced during the past months, he gratefully drew her into his arms and pressed her warm, yielding body against his pounding heart. With heaving chest and stinging eyes, he stood silently, waiting for the painful memories to fade from his mind. But, even after closing his eyes, he could still see long strands of whispy golden hair and large tawny-colored eyes, flecked with brown and glowing with love.

SUMMER VESPERS (Continued)

in the swing or one of the rocking chairs and watch the dark fall and the stars appear and listen to the crickets in the grass, a part of the night you can never find or know where they are, and sometimes it seems they are somewhere inside your head. Usually they were quiet, but sometimes Granpa would talk about things, and some of the things Seb understood and some of the things he did not, but Granpa told him that when a thing doesn't sound important, that is the time to listen closest. Still there would be times Seb just couldn't listen any more. Once during that last summer with Granpa Seb broke from his position on Granpa's knee and ran into the orchard where he climbed an apple tree and didn't come down until long after the moon had begun to shed its pale luster on the branches and far away somewhere he heard the faint echo of a watchful owl.

The harsh cry of a blue jay split the silence, and Seb started from his dream. The bird was sitting smugly on the rusty dinner bell which was nailed to the great oak in the yard. Seb was annoyed with the interruption. Slowly, with one eye on the jay, he eased to the screen door and reached inside where Granpa's old single shot .22 was leaned in the corner. Still staring unblinkingly at the bird, he loaded it and raised it to where it rested on one of the porch's wooden supports. The sight beaded on the white of the jay's belly, and at a touch of the trigger, the jay plummeted to the ground with a soft thud, and it was then Seb noticed that the mist had cleared and the sun was shining.

DETACHMENT (Continued)

dom. If you're just free, you have a responsibility to your freedom but detachment is totality beyond freedom, total loss of responsibility." He lost his excitement, seeing she had lost interest in the matter, and he eased back into a sitting position from his knees and mumbled crossly, "You should detach yourself."

The ocean roar became monotonous. With a fast-thought inflection she asked, "Have you been thinking about all this while I was asleep?"

"Yes," he said somewhat surprised and defensively. "It's important to me. I think of it most of the time. I've got to find someone to detach."

She gazed profoundly at him and he tried to answer it.

"How long have you known me?" she quipped.

"I first saw you two months ago. It was then I first thought of how to get to know you. I've known of you ever since I met your husband last year."

"You've known him since last year?" she asked in a shocked, near trembling voice. "Then you probably knew he was going... How did you meet?" She varied from her frantic questioning to a cool suspicious mode.

"Accidentally, like I said before."

"I know that, but how?"

"He ran into me with his auto, accidentally."

"Were you injured?"

"Only by his conversation in the bar after he helped me up, checking to see that I was not physically damaged. He wanted to buy me a drink and talk. Mainly to ease his conscience about my near injuries."

"You weren't really hurt then?"

"No."

"Then how did his conversation injure you?"

"It didn't really injure me, hasn't yet anyway; actually it shocked me. At first we tried to exchange ideas to find something in common. After three or four drinks he scooted his stool closer to mine and talked secretly about himself and his fear for his wife."

"Me," she stated.

"Yes, he feared for your existence after his death."

"Then he told you about his disease?" she asked very surprised.

"His cold? Yes," he said through a chuckle. "He paid me to attend his funeral and to attend to you afterwards. I said 'Detach yourself' first thing. I had to obtain your interest. I wanted your attention, first as part of my deal with your husband and secondly, you seemed to be the right prospect for detachment since you had lost a lot already. Our first meeting had to be strong. I wondered what this was all about for a while but soon passed it off as just his way of caring for you when things would be at their worst. He didn't want you lonely; there may be a lot more, but that satisfied me. Besides it wasn't all that important to me."

After puzzling this with less emotion she said, "So for that, we've remained together here at this beach swimming, drinking and everything; it was because he was afraid he didn't teach me to accept his death. He really loved me that much?" She tugged her lip with her teeth.

"Seems that way. In fact, though he didn't say it, I think he hoped I would accept you and you would accept me. But I felt it would be better to get you interested in yourself, for you to do as you please, completely detached. We live in strange times, you know; things, people, events, you simply can't predict anymore. Like those fishermen."

"Strange?" she queried.

"Yeah, the fishermen were strange, most kids are strnge. No one really knows anyone else, or themselves. Sex is stranger. Boys and boys and girls and girls; do you ever see 'em mix up anymore? This over population is making everyone wonder what's happening. This whole world is screwy and screwless!"

She smiled dryly and asked, "Why are you concerned with all those people?"

"Well, I was in such a group of strangeness when your husband ran into me. I thought it would be simple to get some easy money from him, play hurt and sue big. But it all happened so differently and so quickly. He got drunk too fast and talked so hard, it happened too fast for me to feel him out for how much to ask. Then he offered me a lot more money than I would have asked. Since then, with the aid of my new wealth and independence, I've detached myself from the gay life and I've lived alone. At first I was going to take the money and forget you both but he haunted me, this poor sucker, a dying guy, trusted me to do a simple job for all that money. So, why not? He rescued me from the strange life, why not help him? My mind felt better after I decided to go through with it. So, here I am, doing nothing, going no place, but doing my job. When we part I'll be free and detached from you and the bargain completed.

She smiled, took his hand and led him into the water. The sun had gone again, no rays reflected on the sea. The darkness consumed two detached people becoming attached.

The next morning they ordered an extra large breakfast and another pillow, plus a light blanket. When they returned from the bath house, all was waiting. She couldn't find her dress or shoes nor he his shirt and slacks. They smiled then laughed at their nudity, which now couldn't be altered. Hand in hand they dashed in for a swim before eating. The day would be cooler because of the shaded sun.

After breakfast was ingested and with bottles of wine in their hands, two each, they left their blanket of crumbs for the birds and walked off to the point. They walked and drank and chased each other over the bluffs, and they tried climbing the lesser bluffs. Each glimpsing at the other trying not to be seen looking amused. She, not very pretty nor filled out enough to be desirable, was tall with slightly oversized hips. He, medium height and clumsy, lacked good looks completely. They stumbled over rocks, laughing challenges at each other. They raced along the dark sand as energy and wine permitted. They both became drugged with wine and fatique.

The sun was beginning to decline when they started back to their sand pit. But it was after many stops for rest that they returned. They ordered more food and wine. Refreshed from the bath house shower they lunged for the food. Still punchy from fatique, they slopped through the meal laughing, spilling, mumbling and messy.

Sea gulls gathered to eat the tidbits they threw along the tide's line. Haunched in the sand they looked seaward, idly pondering. Very relaxed, they waited for the sun to pass out of sight below the few remaining clouds. The moon took over before true darkness could come.

Hours passed and the moon moved overhead. No words, just private thoughts; they rested in the coolness of the seaward breeze, then quietly went to the blanket to sleep.

As the sun split a new sky with a golden glow, it cast shadows into a sand message that headed one nude figure. The dark shadows boldly stated "GRAVES DETACH US ALL."

THE SEA

The sea spits its slime upon the shore
Forming thick pools quivering in the night,
Pulsating pools drooling from the Ocean's
Foaming mouth.
Silently glistening masses slip
Closer to the earth's rocky edge;
But as the sun's strained, tortured
Face lifts itself above the darkness,
The pools become fragile forms
Whose shadows have fallen inside themselves.

L. Waide

REFLECTIONS

Youth figures reflect against
the black pane glass of night.
Reflected reflections ebb-treading thought.
in mind relaxed weariness.
Deflected madness seeks light,
still lips move, not for words.

Dennis Sandlin

AND A BLUEBIRD SAT ONE DAY

Traveling on the wind in search of
great adventure,
the blackbird landed on a branch
beside a bluebird.
"And what adventure have you seen today,
my brother?" asked he.
"The hawk killed a fair chicken
in a distant barnyard,"
replied he.
"And flew away, I suppose?"
"Of course," the bluebird answered.
"It was not for me to spoil
my feathers over a dead chicken!"
The blackbird thought on this for
several moments and flew aloft.
"Where are you going?" shouted the bluebird.
"I go in search of the peaceful doves,"
came the reply carried by the wind.
"They often sing in the willow trees
at this hour."

Rufus

THE WINDS OF ETERNITY

O' to breathe the winds of eternity
As an unshrouded spirit, aloof and free,
Unbound by laws of unlawful men:
Bound to brotherhood, to see man free.

O' to set sail into the winds of eternity,
Guiding me home to rest in paradise
Where man is God and God is man,
And no Tree of Life to make him wise.

The mockingbird sings his song of mockery,
Telling me the winds will never come.
But, I stand on the mountain and wait:
Waiting for Eternity to take me home.

Man serving but servant to none.
And the wind cools the burning of the sun.

Cecil Otis Campbell

BLACKBIRDS

Under the opal irredescense of the augury sky
black wings fly beyond ravished cornfields,
remaining, the mate among slanted brown stalks.
Stagnant winter water, too muddy to reflect,
yet in its darkness mirrors hollow hunger.
Yielding in windy drifts black wings accept
the augury sky.

V. S. Summerlin

Antique woman, hovering grey doves
Mourning the winged graves, the summer cannons,
Cooing their grey breasts
To sleep in the lost garden.

Asleep in the lost garden, huddled
In high branches, dream defecation,
Covering the gone husbands
Covering the dream warriors,
Breeds from war's lovers,
Asleep forever in the lost garden.

Antique women, numb like grey stones
Naming the grey stones, the winter cannons
Sleep in the lost garden.

Robert Walters

JONATHON

Jonathon cries a lot; he lives
in a basement apartment, and sometimes
in the lonely bruise of the deep night,
he begins to think of everything,
and thoughts ebb slowly into tears.

The posters on Jonathon's wall
form words to listen back at him.
and what he thinks about
in the brutal glow of the deep night,
you can never know.

I love Jonathon, because I must
but he is gay, and I, I guess I'm not,
all I really know of him is that
sometimes, in the deep night,
when I'm not there, he cries a lot.

Robert Walters

CHILD

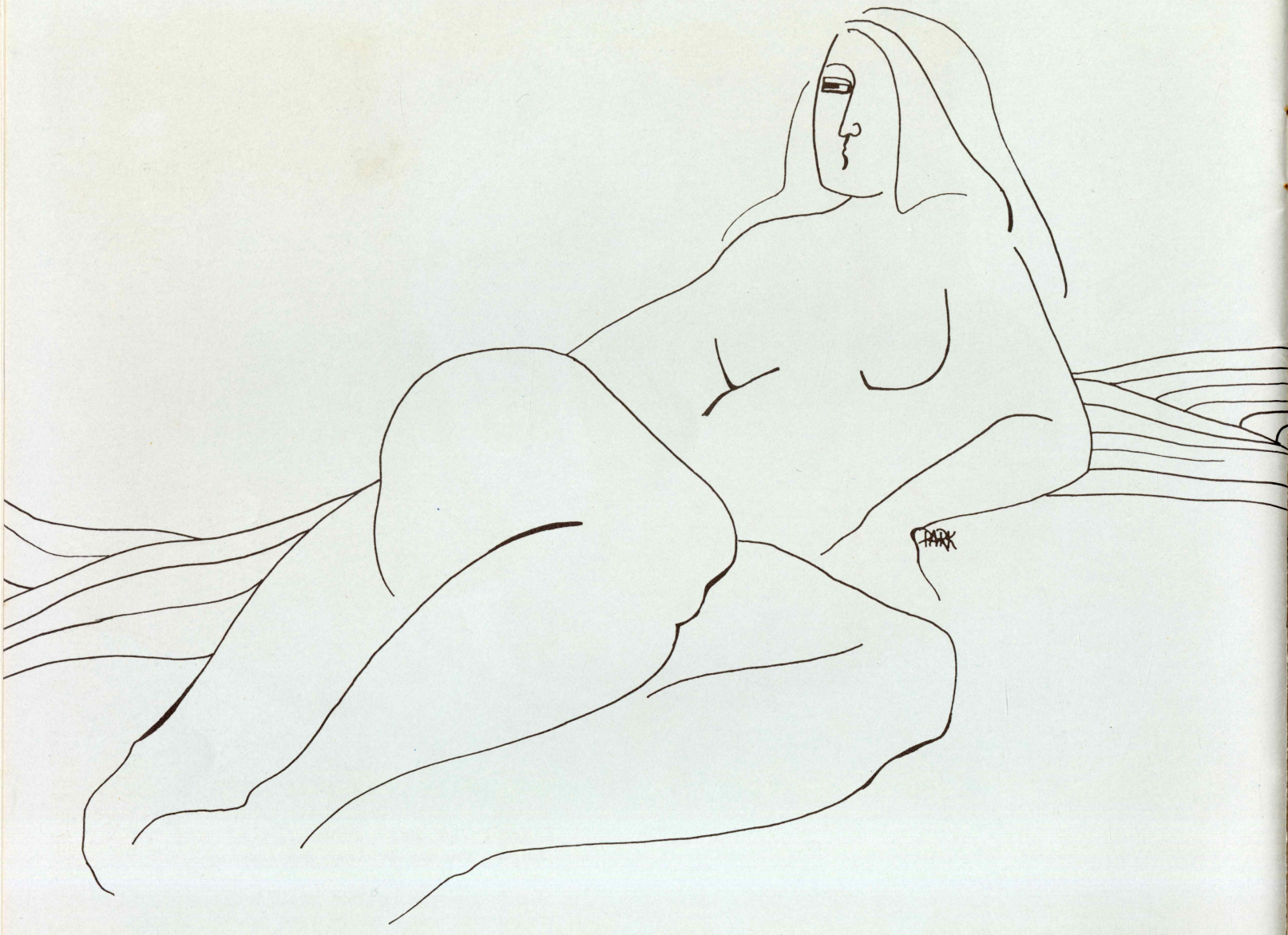
I desire this small animal
clinging to me, probing my ears and eyes
with her dirty face.
She does not know her small body
would rise under me in ages hence
and her limbs be dull
and wonderful with sense

She only knows I am some big, slow creature
that comforts her winters
and eases her summer wanting;
and there is a warmth in the thighs
held against me that is numb with mystery.

She does not know I am the child,
hiding my head in her breasts
and all the while
my small hands innocently
caress her long thighs and soft tresses.

But it is for me only to comprehend
a young man and lover of bodies,
condemned to hold forever
this small body to my body
as neither lover nor friend.

Robert Walters



#1

The one body I've moved with my hands
The only skin I've ever received and judged
Rubbed against with holiness and God
Is my own
Pale dry and not warm
And I felt of a wastrel unborn unbegun
Discovered nothing when I opened my fists
Not even numbness
Still human
In my strain to be insensible

Fey McDonald

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